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HR 619

REQUESTING A COMPREHENSIVE CORAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Statement for
House Committee on Ocean and Marine Resources;
House Committee on Water, Land Use, Development and
Hawaiian Homes;
House Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection
Public Hearing 7 April 1977

by
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Hr. 619 would request that the Department of Land and Natural Resources "Draw up rules and regulations that manage all forms of coral in all areas of the State." This statement on the resolution has been submitted for review to the legislative subcommittee of the Environmental Center of the University of Hawaii. It does not represent an institutional position of the University.

The intent of HR 619 to stimulate the development of a comprehensive program of coral management for Hawaii is appropriate. Certain qualifications as to the statements of rationale in the resolution and as to the provisions that DLNR is urged to incorporate in its rules and regulations should, however, be noted.

1. Coral is a valuable resource, but it is a renewable, not an irreplaceable resource (paragraph 1).

2. To the extent that present laws inadequately provide for the control of the taking of corals (paragraph 3), DLNR cannot be expected to remedy the deficiencies. Only the Legislature can do this. The passage of HB 309, being considered by this session of the Legislature, would provide adequate authority to DLNR to regulate the taking of coral generally.

3. The regulations now proposed by DLNR to control the taking of pink and gold coral (paragraph 4) will not affect the taking of other corals and could thus be considered incomplete and piecemeal (paragraph 5). However, the circumstances under which these precious corals are taken and those under which other corals are taken are sufficiently different that separate regulations governing the two kinds of taking are appropriate.

4. In two respects, DLNR's originally proposed regulation regarding the precious coral departed from the recommendations of Rick Gregg, who may be regarded as Hawaii's foremost authority in precious corals. A recommended minimum size limit was not provided, and a four-year quota was proposed instead of an annual quota. Dr. Gregg has, we understand, agreed that the minimum size limit was unenforceable, but the issue as to the magnitudes of quotas and periods to which the quotas should apply remains unresolved.

The purpose of harvest quotas is to assure that the standing crop will not be so reduced as to reduce the rate of replacement. We understand that annual and biennial quotas are now being considered as alternatives to the originally proposed 4-year quotas. It is important that the impacts of one harvest period be determined before further harvests are approved. Assuming that the biennial quota would be less than double the annual quota recommended by Gregg, the two-year harvest will be only a small fraction of the standing crop. Hence, the choice between an annual and a biennial quota may not be very significant.

5. Bans on taking of corals from certain areas (proposed provision (1)) are appropriate not only where the corals are endangered but also in selected areas for esthetic and other special conservation reasons. Such bans have already been initiated in marine conservation districts.